

Children's Studio School
D.C.'s Public Charter School
Of the Arts and Architecture



Family Handbook

SY 2001 - 2002

Logo – Working in chiaroscuro 6-year-old Cleveland symbolism includes: Harriett Tubman, pyramid and the sound to begin art!

Table of Contents

1. History
2. Philosophy
3. Mission
4. Curriculum
5. Organization and Faculty/Staff
6. Family Involvement
7. Daily Schedule
8. Calendar
9. Summer Program
10. Dress
11. Community Building
12. Health
13. Evaluations
14. Special Education
15. Funding
16. Conclusion

1. History

In 1977 Children's Studio School, a non-profit arts education organization and school, was founded by artist/educator Marcia McDonell who believes that experiencing the arts is essential to our lives, and experienced, reflective artists have the potential to become the greatest teachers, guiding and provoking children in the development of many ways of thinking and knowing.

The School opened in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC as a full day school where very young children from three to eight years old of many cultures and economic backgrounds worked with highly developed artists as their teachers.

Children worked in intensive studio sessions in small groups in the disciplines of architecture, creative writing, dance/choreography, music/composition, multi-media visual art, theater and inter-disciplinary performance art, drawing upon their own life experiences, their cultures, their histories and their intuitive abilities to develop critical problem-solving skills through the artist's processes of creation and analysis as the total means of education.

During its fifteen-year existence as an independent, community-based school, Children's Studio School was nationally recognized by educators, museum and gallery curators, artists and parents for its pioneering Arts as Education® Curricular approach.

In 1993, the Superintendent of DC Public Schools and the Director of the Center for Systemic Educational Change recognized the value of Children's Studio School as a highly desirable partner for the educational reforms needed in the public schools, and invited Studio School to establish a residency program in DCPS.

"In Residence" in DCPS, Children's Studio School provided full-day studio sessions for the children, professional development for DCPS classroom teachers and placed artists/educators in collaborative teams with teachers to implement aspects of the Studio School's Arts As Education® approach in the classroom. A member of the DC Arts and Humanities Collaborative, Studio School continues to work with other arts institutions, such as the National Gallery of Art, Washington Performing Arts Society, the Lincoln Theater/U Street Theater Foundation and the Living Stage.

Children's Studio School has been the recipient of various awards and honors including the fourth

annual Mayor's Art Award for Extraordinary Achievement and Service to the Community in 1985. In 1997, the School's founder was the recipient of the first ever Mayor's Art Award for Excellence in Arts Education. The School has been featured on the cover of three educational journals and has been the subject of numerous articles in other publications, including the Washington Post and City Paper. It has held exhibitions and presentations of students' works in major arts institutions such as the National Gallery of Art and The Phillips Collection.

On August 13, 1996 the Board of Education of the District of Columbia unanimously approved Children's Studio School's application for a Public Charter School to open in the fall of 1997. Building on its twenty-year history of transformative education, Children's Studio School developed its plans for its public Charter School, while at the same time maintaining its very important role in the system-wide reform programs of DCPS.

Children's Studio School Public Charter School of the Arts and Humanities is a public school free and open to all children residing within the District of Columbia. Children's Studio School became the first designated Charter School in 1996, and has received very high marks from the Board of Education, which stated, "The School is making excellent progress."

For the 2001 school year, 104 children, ages 3 through 10, are enrolled.

After a two-year struggle, with strong support from individuals and community organizations, Children's Studio School was finally able to obtain a lease from DCPS and move into its new site at 13 & V Streets, NW -- one week before opening in 1998. Last year.

2. Philosophy and Process: Arts As Education©

Developing a process of questioning and inquiry is central to Children's Studio educational approach. Studio School educates children by immersing them in the process of creative inquiry and the search for their own solutions to problems and issues.

Children's Studio School has, since its inception, evidenced its tenet that *the younger the child, the more developed the teacher should be.* Human development research increasingly shows the earliest years are critical to later success. Therefore, Studio School engages a faculty of accomplished visual and performing artists, architects and writers in their own right, who are also experienced teachers of students of all ages and abilities.

Children also explore and research in galleries, adult artists' studios, the natural environment, museums, zoos, governmental institutions and neighborhoods throughout the city. Principles of mathematics, geometry, physics, biology, chemistry, logic, literature, and history including many abilities and thinking strategies are integrated to support and expand children's total development.

3. Mission

The mission of Children's Studio is to provide children of disparate abilities with the opportunity to actively participate in constructing their own comprehensive, education through the artistic disciplines of architecture, multimedia visual art, music/composition, inter-disciplinary performance, dance/choreography and creative writing to investigate and understand history, the sciences, mathematics, social studies and literature. At Children's Studio School the arts in all their forms are the primary resources and means of developing multiple ways of thinking and knowing.

Crucial to the school's mission is the engagement of developed artist/thinkers of diverse

cultures as complete teachers, responsible for the entire curriculum.

4. Curriculum and Methodology

Children's Studio School curriculum is centered in an acknowledgment that learning is a creative and active process; that there are many different approaches to solving questions; and that all knowledge is connected, not only across disciplines but in content.

The curriculum content incorporates each artist's concepts, ideas and passion. The national standards established by the Department of Education of the United States and the Curriculum Framework Documents developed by the DC Public Schools for both academic and artistic subjects are also referenced. The Children's Studio School conceptual curricular approach allows for different content areas to be explored at the same time. Children work in different artistic disciplines and learn the means of seeking and finding solutions offered by each.

Central to the Children's Studio School curriculum is the development of each child's capabilities as a member of the community to work both independently and in collaboration with others; to develop responsible means of resolving conflict and handling differences of opinion and perspective; to

utilize diverse means of solving a problem; and to imagine, plan, experiment, revise and bring one's own ideas to reality.

Children are also involved in documenting their own work and development and are evaluated using both standardized measurements employed by the school system and assessments that are based on their abilities to communicate ideas and knowledge in various forms.

Children's Studio School has a technology plan. The technology is to be totally integrated in the curriculum and experience of the children in the studio to allow them to utilize technology as a tool vehicle for documentation, research and form of expression. The children are in process of developing a broad and detailed understanding of technology and its potential, as well as its limitations. Some components of technology are: high performing computers in each studio (2 or more), fast network capability between all studios and administrative offices, a media center for digitalization of photo and video, video editing capacity, access to internet from all studios and the creation of a digital portfolio for each student in which multi-media documents of child development are accessible for ongoing and final evaluation.

Curriculum outlines for each discipline are available at the beginning of each semester. Documentation of past curricula are available at the conclusion of each semester.

5. Organization

Children's Studio School engages an extraordinary faculty of full time professional artists/educators of many cultures and disciplines. Artists/teachers are assisted by full time teaching assistants. Interns from around the country and teacher fellows from other public schools, studying the School's Arts As Education© approach, assist in the studios, along with volunteers, including parents.

A. Faculty

Faculty:

Ann Helfrich, Visual Arts
Carl Neita, Architecture, Visual Arts
Carolivia Herron, Creative Writing
Hanniyyah Boxie, Interdisciplinary Arts
Helanius J. Wilkins, Dance/Choreography
John Murillo, Creative Writing
Maria Firmino Castillo, Interdisciplinary Visual Arts
Kwelismith, Music and Vocal Performance

Brother Ah, Robert Northern, Drumming
Desépé Thomson de Vargas, Photography

Artist Assistants and Associates

Fumiyo Hashida, Dance and Movement
Artie Smoot, Visual Art
Sandra Guiloff, Visual Art
Salwa Osei, Fiber Arts
Gerry James, Light and Sound

B. Administration/Staff

Franklin Wassmer, Associate Director
Lisa Buchsbaum, School Coordinator/Administrator
Noemy Rivera-Gutierrez, Administrative Assistant
Karen Williams, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Margarita Avedisian, Mental Health Clinician
Djeneba Faal, Artists, Families and Communities Coordinator
Julie Camerata, Special Education Coordinator and Teacher
Sleeprell Rice, parent, Bookkeeper
Aquila Williams, Bookkeeping Assistant
Cardella Beatty, Office Support and Parent Liaison
Molly Bryant, Security/School Support
Gail Hawkins-Shirar, Building and Technology Systems
Garlando Henderson, Engineer
Dave Coghill, Custodian

Diane James, Cleaning Staff
Ernest Thomas, Security/Custodian
Cornelia Fuentes, parent, School Support and Food Service
Georgina Shelby, Studio Support, Gardener
Otis Collins, Foster Grandparent
Ida Newman, Foster Grandparent
Laudicea Souza, Studio Support
Lionidas Joya, Daytime light cleaning

Children's Studio School Public Charter School is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the founding president and artist Marcia McDonell, other artists/ scholars, parents and community members. The Board is responsible for the policies of the school and implementation of its mission as set forth in the charter.

6. Family Involvement

The family is the most important part of any child's education. At Children's Studio School, we seek to nurture the connections between school life and family/home. Also, because of the commitment to small class size, the support of the families we serve as volunteers is essential.

Some ways to strengthen these ties are to:

- be one of the 16 studio parents (studio support team)
- help children with their research and other homework
- read with your child(ren) daily (a proven way to help children become literate and it only takes twenty minutes a day!)
- help children have excellent attendance -- bring children to school on time and pick them up from school on time (there is a charge for late pick up of children)
- visit parks, cultural events, family events, museums, community and city celebrations, attend parent workshops at school and experience the Arts As Education© process
- attend school cultural events
- attend school visit days
- meet with your child(ren)'s artists/educators

Upon enrollment all parents commit to a minimum of thirty volunteer hours in support of the school. Please sign in your volunteer hours at the office.

Working together we can create the best educational environment for all of the children.

It is essential that children's required, updated documentation be in the office by the beginning of each school year.

If there are any changes of address or telephone number, please notify the office immediately, and return appropriate changes and update forms to the office.

7. Daily schedule

School hours are 8:30am - 4:00pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Each Wednesday, school will end after lunchtime, and in the afternoons artists/educators will compile, assess and discuss children's work for their portfolios, conduct faculty development and parent meetings, and work on their curriculum and documentation.

School begins for all children on September 4th, 2001 at 8:30am.

School ends for all children on June 22, 2002 at 4:00pm.

The daily schedule is as follows:

7:15 - 8:30 Early Light Studio

8:00 - 8:15 Breakfast

Group 1 (3 to 6 year olds)

8:30am - 8:45am: Morning reading and quiet activity

8:45am - 10:15am: Morning Studio

10:15am - 10:30am: Clean up and Line up to go outside

10:30am - 11:00pm: Playground time

11:00am - 11:10am: Line-up for washing hands and lunch

11:10am - 11:30am: Lunch

11:30am - 11:50am: Bathroom and Choice Time

11:50am - 1:20pm: Nap (3 and 4 year olds)

1:20pm - 1:30pm: Bathroom and transition to studio

12:00pm - 1:30pm: Session for 5 year olds (and some younger)

1:30pm - 3:00pm: PM Studio

3:00pm - 4:00pm: Choice/snack/special sessions

Group II and III (5-10 year olds)

8:30am - 8:45am: Morning reading and quiet activity

8:45am - 11:00am: Morning Studio with Literacy and Math

11:00am - 11:30am: Playground

11:30am - 11:40am: Line up to wash hands

11:40am - 12:15pm: Lunch

12:15pm - 3:00pm: Afternoon Studio

3:00pm - 4:00pm: Choice/snack/special sessions

Late Arrival/Late Departure

Children's Studio School has a strict policy on tardiness. Children must be in school at 8:30 AM. Arrivals after 8:45 AM are considered tardy. Children with repeated non-emergency tardiness will be considered non compliance to the school protocols and can be considered as a reason for disenrollment of the child. Excessive tardiness and absences are highly detrimental to the children's learning experience in the school.

Please note that the policy for late pick-up of children is as follows: Children's Studio School offers a 20 minute grace period. After that, the parent will be charged 50 cents for each additional minute.

Late fees must be paid immediately to the Artist/Teacher. Late fees will increase \$1/day if not paid by the next day.

Children's Studio School offers programs for children. During times when "regular school" is not in session. They are:

Early Light	7:15am-8:30am
After 4 Studio	4pm-6pm, and Wednesdays, 12pm-4pm.

Breakfast is served between 8:00am and 8:15am. Lunch is from 11:15am to 12pm. Children can provide their own lunch or ask to have lunch provided by the School from Untouchable Taste Catering. Vegetarian lunches must be ordered in advance. Lunch is free, reduced or full-pay, based on family income

8. Calendar 2001-2002

The Children's Studio School Public Charter School year consists of 186 school days. DC Public Schools procedure for early dismissal and school closing due to snow emergencies are followed. The calendar year includes sufficient flexibility to accommodate up to 8 days missed due to inclement weather.

September 4	First Day of School
September 11	Studio parents meet
September 18	Back to School Night
October 8	Columbus Day -- School Closed
October 19 Conferences	Family/Faculty
November 12	Veteran's Day -- Closed
November 22, 23	Thanksgiving

December 24	Winter Break for students
January 7	School resumes
January 3,4 and 5	Professional Development Retreat for Faculty and Assistants
January 21	Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Observation -- Closed
January 31	End of Semester Children Exhibit and Presentations
February 8	Family/Faculty Conferences
February 18	President's Day - Closed
April 15-19	Spring SAT 9 testing
April 29	Spring Break - School Closed
May 8	School resumes

May 27	Memorial Day -- School Closed
June 14	Family/Faculty Meetings (Conferences)
June 20	Family Presentation and End of Year Celebration
June 21	Last Day of School for Children
June 28	Last Day of School for Faculty and Faculty Assistants

9. Other Programs

Children's Studio School has a full day, six-week City As Studio summer program in July/August for children ages 3 to 11. Children's Studio School students and their siblings are given priority for the summer program. If adequate funds are raised, sliding-scale tuition based on family income will be offered again.

In Children's Studio School City As Studio Summer Program, children investigate the history of their families and neighborhoods to learn about their pasts and, working in varied media, to envision the future of their communities.

This successful program, which includes research at historical sites in Washington, DC, interviews with community elders and businesspeople, and, as always, transformation of their research and experiences into their own forms, has been highly acclaimed by the Humanities Council of DC, the office of the Chief Academic Officer, and other educational and arts institutions for the depth and importance of the work done by the students.

Children's Studio School also offers tutoring, baseball and athletics, and artists and families programs in its developing Urban Arts Complex.

10. Dress

Children will be soiled with paints and, clay etc. Please dress them accordingly. Please also send your child(ren) on the first day with an extra set of clothes.

11. Community Building

Children's Studio School has a community building document. The document includes expectations for children and consequences for violations of the code. At the beginning of the school year, all parents must sign that they have read, understood and agree to uphold Children's Studio School guidelines on discipline.

Children's Studio School is a community, and as such has developed guidelines for interaction that center on respect and care, and encourage personal responsibility for one's learning environment and community.

The three basic rules are:

Respect for oneself.

Respect for others.

Respect for the space and materials.

Within each group, the children, along with their artists/teachers, discuss and devise the guidelines for each studio, and at the same time, discuss the means of solving any problems which may arise, individually, between individuals, or related to issues about space or materials. In this manner, children are responsible for rules that they create themselves, with logical consequences. Discipline focuses on problem-solving

and development of self-discipline by children, with guidance from their artists/teachers.

When a child does not follow the rules of the group they may be asked to take a short time away from the group or from the materials which are being inappropriately used.

A child who repeatedly disrupts the class and does not respond to resolution with peers or other related consequences will be sent to the Associate Director's Office for a discussion on resolution of the problem. Parents will be notified if a child seems to be having a particular difficulty. In more serious cases, the parents and artist/teacher, together with the Associate Director, will work together to find a workable solution.

At all times, an attempt is made to respond to the needs of the individual, without compromising the needs of the larger community. Thus, if a child continues to have difficulty and persists with disruptive behavior, further steps will be taken towards a special needs approach, possibly through a special education program, and other recommendations.

Children's Studio School is a community of diverse individuals working together towards a common goal: a holistic, dynamic, multicultural, and multi-dimensional education for children. Within such a dynamic and diverse group, conflicts and disagreement

arise at various levels. Productive and constructive resolution of conflict is central to creation of any balanced and healthy community.

Therefore, when a child has a conflict with another child, the artist/teacher facilitates a conflict resolution session where each child has an opportunity to share her/his version of what happened, and come to a workable solution together.

If parents should have a concern about any aspect of their child's interactions at Studio School they should

- seek an immediate conference with the child's home studio teacher. At that point the parent and home studio teacher will discuss the problem and together devise a solution.
- If a parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the conference, the parent should then seek a conference with the Associate Director who will work to address the concern.

12. Health

Health forms must be renewed annually.

Children are not permitted to attend school unless all information is complete and updated by the first day of school each September.

Please notify the office or home studio teacher if your child is sick, and let us know the expected day of your child's return. If children become sick during the school day parents will be notified to take the child home.

Medicines will be administered to your child at your request only. Written authorization forms must be filled out for this purpose. All medicines must be labeled with your child's name and dosage instructions. You must deliver the medicine directly to the home studio artist/teacher.

The school has a supply of first aid items to treat minor scrapes and bruises. In case of serious emergency, we attempt to contact parents immediately. Please inform the office of any changes in your daytime telephone numbers so that no time will be wasted in reaching you. If immediate attention is required, Children's Studio School will take the child to the hospital or may call an ambulance. Parents will be asked to meet the child and accompanying teacher or other responsible person.

13. Evaluations

Evaluation and assessment at Children's Studio Public Charter School takes place on several levels.

Children assess their own work, are assessed by their artists/teachers, and beginning in first grade, take the Stanford 9 standardized tests in mathematics and language required by DC Public Schools.

In the course of the first eight weeks artists/teachers will send home a checklist which evaluates children's progress in three areas: a) general; b) specific to the discipline; and c) target skills and content areas. Copies of the children's work evidencing their progress along with the checklist are then placed in an evaluation folder for each child at the end of the semester. At the end of each semester, Team Studio and Noon Session artists also complete a checklist for each child.

At the end of every semester formal parent's conferences are scheduled, where the evaluation folders and portfolios are shared with parents.

14. Special Education

Children's Studio School PCS strictly adheres to an Open Door Policy for all children. Because admission to Children's Studio School is based on lottery and waiting list, all children, including those with special needs, may be admitted. As a DC Public Charter School, Children's Studio School has a Special Education Program in place that includes additional student

evaluations and progress reports in accordance with the Individualized Education Program (IEP). While Children's Studio School is a member of the DC Charter School Cooperative for Special Education, Children's Studio School philosophy governing Special Education students' process of inclusion and improvement through Arts as Education© are unique elements at our School.

During the year, faculty and staff participate in the Faculty, Student, Family Support Team (FSFST). Through these meetings, children with special needs may be identified, meeting the obligations of *Child Find*.

Referrals to Children's Studio School's Mental Health Program (see #15) or referrals to our TAT/Multi-Disciplinary Team to request further evaluations for special education eligibility are generated by the FSFST, or when requested by a parent or legal guardian.

Children's Studio School employs a special education teacher who performs both pull-out and in-studio academic support. Speech/Language, Physical and Occupational therapies are contracted as needed.

All faculty and staff are sensitive to the special needs of children with disabilities, and in no way discriminate against students. Faculty and Staff participate in Professional Growth Sessions that

include exploration and thinking about Definitions of Special Education, Children's Studio School Approach to Special Education, and Necessary Requirements for Curriculum, Assessment and Documentation for Special Education students. In addition, parents/guardians are informed of specific rights regarding the child's assessment and implementation of special needs programs, pertaining to decision-making, confidentiality, and participation in the assessment process. Children's Studio School proceeds with special education evaluation only with formal parental permission.

15. Mental Health

Through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Initiative, Children's Studio School has augmented its full time staff with a mental health clinician, Dr. Maggie Avedisian. Mental Health includes several components at our school. They are:

- Early Intervention
- Group Sessions for Girls and Boys
- Individual Therapy for children and families
- School Clubs and Mentoring
- Workshops for Families
- Parents Anonymous
- Counseling towards improved behavior on a case by case basis.

Faculty Development and Studio Management Techniques

A parent or a faculty member may fill out a referral form for counseling. In many cases, a child will receive the benefit of Children's Studio School's Mental Health program after several attempts to support the child's growth and well-being have been made through faculty intervention in the studio environment. In cases of emergency, or if desired by the parent or legal guardian, counseling and intervention may begin immediately.

If any member of Children's Studio Faculty and Staff suspect child abuse or neglect, the Associate Director will review the reason for suspicion and follow-up with the family or, when abuse or neglect is evident, may be obligated to report these findings to the appropriate authority.

16. Funding

Children's Studio School Public Charter School of the Arts and Humanities is funded partially by per child tuition payments received from the District of Columbia. We are dependent upon funding from

foundations, corporations, and individual donations to maintain our small faculty/student ratio, guest artist programming, superior material supplies, new technology acquisitions, additional programs and space costs.

Parents are welcome to offer suggestions on funding sources and to join our fundraising committee.

16. Conclusion

Children's Studio School and its Urban Arts Complex is a place for learning for all through a creative process which stimulates the whole child and engages the entire family and community. We are proud to be the first and only school of its kind in the nation, and welcome your participation in making this a success for the children of the District of Columbia.

Children's Studio School is a Drug-Free and Violence-Free Environment

In accordance with Title IV Safe and Drug-Free and Communities Act (SDFSCA) "No Use" philosophy.

Children's Studio School, all its employees, volunteers, children, families and members of the community have made a commitment to maintain a learning environment that is free of

Alcohol
Tobacco
Illegal Drugs
Wielding of Weapons of Destruction
Violence
Physical or Mental Abuse